Massachusetts

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has an intergovernmental ground water protection strategy and program involving state, county, and municipal governments. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE) has regulations to control ground water discharges from industrial sources and all sources discharging more than 15,000 gallons per day of sanitary wastes. DEQE also has comprehensive regulations to control hazardous and solid wastes, land application of sludge and septage, and underground injection of wastes. The DEQE also has a strong technical and financial assistance program for local government.

The technical assistance program includes a bimonthly newsletter and a number of guides and handbooks on best management practices for road salting, erosion and sedimentation, developing a ground water protection program, ground water monitoring, and hydrogeologic information sources for the state. The DEQE has also developed a unique water supply protection atlas consisting of four overlays: water sources, waste sources, aquifer information, and drainage basins for 177 of the USGS topographic quadrangle maps that cover the state. Each municipality has been given overlays for the 125,000 topographic maps delineating its boundaries. This has been an important tool in developing state and local ground water protection programs. DEQE has recently hired a full-time land use planner to assist municipalities in development and implementation of local land use controls to protect ground water.

Massachusetts also has a financial assistance program to municipalities for acquisition of land to protect important aquifers. This program provided $10 million in grants to 26 communities in 1983 and 1984 with another $4 million available for 1986. The Massachusetts legislature failed to pass a major piece of legislation in 1985 that would have allowed local communities to tax real estate transactions and create a fund for the purchase of land for a number of purposes including aquifer protection. However, this legislation has now been refiled.

A number of cities and towns in Massachusetts have developed programs to protect ground water. At present, 325 of the 351 cities and towns have adopted zoning regulations, by-laws, or Board of Health regulations to protect ground water. These include flood plain and wetland zoning, aquifer protection districts, toxic and hazardous materials controls, and control of underground storage of petroleum products.